

Prayer Leader

Indicators of a Praying Church

By Carol Madison

I enjoy getting together once a month with a group of men and women who are just like me: they lead the prayer ministries in their churches and are eager to connect with others of like mind, heart, and assignment. We share resources, exchange ideas for prayer initiatives, and pray together. We try to stay apprised of the various local and national calls to prayer so that we might invite our congregations to participate.

Yet we are different in our emphases. Justin is particularly passionate about mentoring and mobilizing men in his church to pray with a worship focus. Valerie has developed an effective drive-through prayer ministry in her community. Andrea oversees a ministry that helps people with healing kinds of prayer. I am especially engaged in mentoring a younger generation in prayer.

Whenever someone shares an idea or successful prayer initiative, I think to myself, Hey, we should do that. Any of these prayer ideas and initiatives would enhance my church's prayer ministry. But as the director of prayer ministries, I have the responsibility of launching prayer initiatives that best fit our congregation—initiatives that God confirms He wants us to do.

Praying Church Indicators

So what does a praying church look like? Are there some common indicators that can help prayer leaders move in the right

direction without trying to be like every other church?

A few years ago, I served on the Prayer First team, the denominational prayer ministry for Converge Worldwide. The team came up with a definition and description of a praying church that offers prayer leaders some general goals. With special thanks to Dana Olson (pastor of Faith Baptist Fellowship of Sioux Falls, SD), here is our definition: A praying church is humbled, desperate, and hopeful in prayer, with a focus on worshipping Jesus Christ and praying Kingdom-minded prayers.

We also developed a list of specific indicators of a praying church:

- A praying church is led by a praying pastor who has a heart to see the church become “a house of prayer for all people.”
- A praying church encourages its members to establish personal and family prayer in their homes.
- A praying church establishes a “rhythm of prayer” on a weekly, monthly, quarterly, and yearly basis. Weekly and monthly prayer gatherings undergird the concerns and ministry needs of the church. A quarterly prayer gathering seeks to incorporate greater numbers of church members. A yearly prayer gathering may include praying with other like-minded churches for revival and evangelism.
- A praying church has a systematic way of praying for pastors and its leaders through the use of email or other prayer updates. This could include prayer teams designated for each staff member and elder, with a commitment to pray regularly for that leader.
- A praying church has a designated room or space as a “prayer room” that is resourced with helpful prayer tools. This prayer room can be used for prayer during services, special 24-hour seasons of prayer, small group prayer gatherings, or individual prayer times.

- A praying church offers regular prayer training opportunities to teach and model key prayer principles.
- A praying church recognizes intercessors who are especially gifted in prayer by identifying, equipping, and mobilizing them to pray in ways that acknowledge their unique gifting. It makes use of intercessors in strategic ways and develops prayer groups to encourage particular passions.
- A praying church makes effective use of social media and other communication to keep its members motivated and informed in prayer.
- A praying church engages in strategic prayer evangelism for the community, nation, and the world. This could include prayerwalking neighborhoods, adopting unreached people groups, praying for the nations, supporting missionaries in prayer—or any other way of praying toward the harvest.
- A praying church is connected to other national prayer initiatives.
- A praying church has a goal of motivating at least 50 percent of its congregation to some form of active prayer. It is a measurable prayer goal that is kept before pastoral staff.
- A praying church prays regularly for other churches, and is willing to mentor and encourage them in prayer.

You may not hit every one of these points, but keeping these goals in mind can help you, as a prayer leader, to move your church closer to being identified as a praying church—as God is uniquely calling you.

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